

**Minutes
of the
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday, February 12, 2009
Council Chambers
7:00pm**

Historical Commission Members Present: Russo, Berg, Jones, Roach, Melone, Steele, Loukas

Staff Present: Hayward

Public Present: See attached Sign-In Form

Russo chaired. The meeting opened at 7:00p.m.

1. Public Hearing – Demolition Permit for 81 Highland Avenue, Leonard T. Holt, applicant; William Earle, executor of the Cynthia Earle estate, owner and applicant of record

Leonard Holt, developer, presented historical information on the property based on a title search. He informed that he wanted to build a two-family at the site that would conform to existing zoning laws as this Highland Avenue neighborhood is located within the “T” zone. He commented that the proposed building would be much nicer than the recently built two family homes on Grandview Avenue that abut this property.

Holt described how the existing house originally had a garage attached to it that was incorporated into the home as a workshop. He also mentioned that the address of the proposed building will become a Gilbert Street address. The front of the proposed building will front on to Gilbert Street.

Russo questioned about the history of the building. Holt responded that he did some researched in the assessor’s office and the building department. He found that the house was most likely built around 1926.

Melone questioned the proposed parking for the new building. Holt explained that parking would be in garages that are proposed to be built under the new building. This will allow for less pavement and more green space around the building.

Steele questioned what the proposed materials would be on the exterior of the building. Holt responded that the materials have not been decided upon but that clapboard or vinyl will be used.

Jones noted that the existing house is not architecturally recognizable and that the proposed height of the new building was a bit excessive.

Holt responded that the proposed height is allowable.

Russo then opened the meeting up to the public for questioning.

Maura McNeil of 85 Highland Avenue was very concerned about the parking situation. She explained that Gilbert Street has restricted parking and she doesn't want additional parking on Highland Avenue.

Joyce Hellman of 86 Highland Avenue was concerned about the intersection of Gilbert Street and Highland Avenue. She explained that with more cars and parking, that there could be a potential hazard as that intersection is quite tricky.

Kathy McNeil of 85 Highland Avenue was concerned about her personal property. She was concerned that new construction could ruin her concrete wall facing Highland Avenue and did not want water flooding her basement. Holt assured her that her property would be safe during and after construction.

David Hellman of 86 Highland Avenue questioned the entrance to the former garage on the existing building. He was told by the former residents of the home that the driveway was virtually unusable due to dangerous conditions entering onto Highland Avenue. He was worried that this scenario may become a real issue again.

Russo noted that there was no real historical significance to the house. He then asked for a motion.

Vote: Berg motioned that the house was not preferably preserved.

Jones seconded that motion.

All were in favor.

No demolition delay. Not preferably preserved.

2. Introduction of New HC Member – Russo introduced Elisabeth Loukas who was recently appointed to the HC.

3. Barns and Outbuildings Inventory

Russo noted that no work had been done in the field in the past month due to the icy conditions.

Steele noted that on the forms she had, most of those buildings are still in existence.

Berg mentioned that in his research he found that in 1925, 90% of building permits issued were for garages. Most permits he found detailed the garage as being 1st, 2nd or 3rd class which described the type of materials used to build them.

Joyce Kelly of the Historical Society of Watertown noted that garages that used to be on Longfellow Street have now been turned into homes. She questioned where the inventory project goes from here.

Russo noted that the goal of the project is to use a historical database to identify trends and other pertinent historical information.

4. Charles Brigham house

Russo reported that the Charles Brigham house, Russell Avenue sold for \$700,000 to a resident of Stearns Road. Russo has drafted a letter to congratulate the new owner on his purchase of such an historically significant home.

5. Other Items Discussed

- a. **Federal Stimulus money** – The use of federal stimulus money for preservation projects was discussed. Projects mentioned were the completion of the survey of the Mt. Auburn Cemetery property line location. Russo noted that the project is ready to go, it just needs approval.

Kelly noted that the Fowle House could use new shutters.

- b. Hayward noted that EBI Consulting is proposing a communication antenna at 705 Mt. Auburn Street (Tufts Building). Russo to send in comments.
- c. Kelly announced that a site visit was held at 24-28 Arsenal Street. The site visit was held to photo document the building before it is demolished. Roach and Russo also attended.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.